

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL
PUBLIC SPEAKING SESSION
MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2015
6:30 PM**

CALL TO ORDER

Council President McCarthy called the Public Speaking Session to order at 6:37 p.m.

ROLL CALL

City Clerk Martinez called the roll.

The following members were present:

130th District: Kathryn Bukovsky, Scott Burns
131st District: Jack O. Banta, Denese Taylor-Moye,
132nd District: John Olson
133rd District: Thomas McCarthy, Jeanette Herron
134th District: Michelle Lyons
135th District: Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Salter
136th District: Jose Casco, Alfredo Castillo
137th District: Aidee Nieves, Milta Feliciano
138th District: Anthony Paoletto, Nessah Smith
139th District: Eneida Martinez

A quorum was present. Council President McCarthy announced that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia was absent due to illness and Council Member Holloway has a schedule conflict.

THE FOLLOWING NAMED PERSON HAS REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2015, 2015 AT 6:30 P.M., IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 45 LYON TERRACE, BRIDGEPORT, CT.

NAME

SUBJECT

Robert Whisnant

Drug activity in neighborhood.

115 Washington Avenue, Apt. 5J
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Mr. Whisnant came forward and spoke about the small park adjacent to City Hall. He suggested that the benches and vegetation be removed so that the drug dealers couldn't come back.

Cecil C. Young
99 Carroll Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06607

Cover-up of whistle blow and unjust termination.

Mr. Cecil Young came forward and wished everyone a Merry Christmas. He said that he wanted to thank those who voted in favor of his issues. He said he has come before the Council numerous times during the last 8 years and that he had to spend \$10,000 for an attorney regarding his unjust termination. He said that he had worked for the City for many years and never had a problem until the last few years. He claimed that a judge would be impartial but that Labor Relations Department was not impartial. He went on to speak about his lawsuit and announced that he was not a trouble maker. He asked the Council Members to look into the allegations and that all the evidence was part of the record.

Ethan Book
144 Coleman Street
Bridgeport, CT 06604

City government efficiency and conflicts of interest.

Mr. Council President, Members of the City Council and public:

I am Ethan Book, a resident of the Hollow sector of this City, a 2013 candidate for City Council, 131st District, and a 2014 candidate for State Representative, 128th District.

There have been recent reporting of an unexpectedly large City budget deficit, a deficit reported to be as much as \$20 million and a deficit occurring at the occasion of a major change in city administration. On this subject, the December 17th Connecticut Post reports 131st District Councilwoman Denese Taylor-Moye commenting, "I'm in a state of shock. Why didn't anyone see this? This is mind-blowing." Yet another former Councilwoman, Trish Swain, also commented of this situation, "Nobody really understood how to read [the budget]. And the questions were rarely answered other than to say we were 'on budget.'" It was also commented that the budget reports were often late, often as much as three months. I have my own comments.

On October 21, 2013, I spoke to this Council (that in the context of the crisis of the infamous \$500,000 driveway). I proposed five points for improving financial management and accountability. Some of those follow,

- that there be at least one public hearing on proposed budgets,
- that there be at least one internal city auditor (as there had been up to 2009 when the position was curiously eliminated), and
- that there should be at least two legislative aides to assist in council business (that proposal made while I pointed out that a sole city legislative aide had been fired in 2012.)

Also, on other occasions, I have spoken before this Council regarding issues of apparent conflict of interest, a situation here which tends to reduce the balance of power which is intended between the legislative and executive branches of city government). I have additionally spoken about a lack of accountability in campaign finance reporting and questionable use of council

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member stipends, particularly regarding 131st District Council Members Denese Taylor-Moye and Jack Banta.

One these areas I elaborate further. At a recent council meeting of December 7th, Councilwoman Taylor-Moye nominated Tom McCarthy to be Council President. In her comments, she repeatedly stressed that President McCarthy had been very helpful to her. Let's look at this more closely.

During about 2012, there were requests for reimbursement of council expenses through the stipend program. Then legislative aide Thomas White attempted to get some explanation for reported expenses. He was abruptly fired by President McCarthy. The explanation given by President McCarthy was that his termination action was done to save on city expenses. However, that firing was promptly followed by Mr. McCarthy's hiring of another person under a different budget category, a person who essentially does nothing.

Then President McCarthy established a debit card system for stipend payments, a system which is designed to not allow for reasonable review of payments, except for more public review such as through the cumbersome and politically-biased Freedom of Information system.

Also during 2013, an election year, President McCarthy reportedly made available the budget category of legislative services for various individual council members to make contributions to non-profit entities, something that looks very much like misuse of public funds for political campaigning and party building.

Further, when I challenged Councilwoman Taylor-Moye and Councilman Banta about campaign finance reporting and the use of stipend funds, President McCarthy reportedly told Councilwoman Taylor-Moye that she didn't have to answer my questions.

Then, in the recent December 7th council meeting, Councilwoman Taylor-Moye nominated Thomas McCarthy, assuredly a man who is courteous, to be re-elected as Council President and saying that he has been very helpful. Sure, he's been helpful to her. It frankly looks like a Council member who has a conflict of interest nominates and votes for another council member who has a conflict of interest. And now she says about the discovered deficit, "I'm in a state of shock. Why didn't anyone see this? This is mind-blowing."

Not to me! Fortunately, not all council members serving in 2013 used or misused the stipend program and not all availed themselves to the observed misuse of funds intended for legislative services. Also, scrutiny over the budget process and adherence to a budget are related. However, there does appear to exist a broad culture mentality of go along, get along, what's good for me is okay and of deliberate indifference. What I describe here is a lack of honesty, public accountability and leadership.

I share these thoughts for improving government efficiency and accountability.

May God bless us all!

John Marshall Lee
30 Beacon Street
Bridgeport, CT 06605

Follow the money.

It's that time of year when experience as a child may come to you in the form of wonder, joy, or peace or the more practical review of the past year with a hanging question as to whether you have been good for goodness' sake. Otherwise, "you'd better watch out, better not pout".....etc.

Well as one administration departs City Hall, information has surfaced calling into question whether financial revelations are real examples of how to take advantage of neighbors in cynical fashion. As such we need to ask: "How do excesses happen?" Why were checks and balance structure not in place to prevent what will be seen as wrongful expenditures? What can the Council do, to investigate and set up process to prevent this in the future?

I suggest grouping the concepts tonight as the "three C's": Cars, credit cards, and cell phones. You need to do some research to get all the facts out, as some of my comments merely trust some incredible rumors, but Bridgeport is a place where rumors often carry much truth. Sorting it out with detail is your duty, I suggest.

Each of you has read about the purchase of two autos during the last week of November for \$72,000 from the Public Facility budget. I have looked in the detailed July 2015 monthly financial operating report but find no line item pertaining to vehicle acquisition. So it is likely that it may be part of Public Facilities Capital budget, but how would the Council know? Aren't you the folks who will be held responsible by taxpayers? Do any of you have a current balance sheet for the various capital projects undertaken by the City just in this fiscal year? If not, is it fair for a taxpayer to ask you? Why not?

Ask the new administration in its effort to become more OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE and TRANSPARENT whether you can get up to speed. Won't they be asking you per tonight's agenda to authorize bonds to fund Capital Projects? Isn't it fair for you to keep track of where the money is spent when you authorize it? (And not for nothing at this moment, who is authorized to drive City cars between home and work? And where is such a list posted? Why not have such info public on the City site and let taxpayers become a form of Neighborhood Watch?)

So much for cars, but what about cards? Credit cards that is. Those of you who participate in the Stipend system know about debit cards. Each quarter the account can be replenished with additional dollars from your stipend balance to be used to support City Council related duties and expenses up to \$9000 annually. You have a limit of \$2,250 per quarter. But how many city employees have City credit cards at this time, or did during November 2015? What records did they keep of usage on City business? Were there any practical limits on what they could spend? Were records sent to another City office for oversight? How were the categories of expense coded into City departmental line items? Don't you need to see whether this method of handling expenses needs review, oversight, and listing so that the public can begin to trust in practical monitoring?

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Finally, let's address the subject of cell phones. How many City cell phones are out there? What Departmental Line Item are they expensed under? What monitoring is done to be sure that taxpayers only pay for City business? I looked at the Office of the Mayor department expense budget and do not see a line item that deals with communications equipment and expenses unless it is 55155 Office Equipment Rental/Leasing that shows \$5534 as the annual budget for all such in the current fiscal year. Is it true that more than one dozen people have run up and/or submitted nearly \$120,000 of cell phone expense to the City? How can that be possible? Before such would be paid out, what proof is required of business purpose of calls? How soon must bills be submitted? Can we have a list of those with City cell phones? And by what process are hard line phone systems and cell phones integrated today?

Cars, credit cards, and cell phones are things we all use and pay for personally. They are tools for City employees, but when rumors abound, when facts are not provided routinely and the internet records are not publicly available; taxpayers lose trust in civil servants. How can you as our representatives, set up systems with executive cooperation to reduce budgets? Time will tell.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Council President McCarthy called the next speaker forward.

Mr. Clyde Nicholson, of Bridgeport, came forward asked that the rules be changed. He said that when a new Mayor comes in, there are new rules. He said that the previous Mayor had signed some agreements that would affect the budget for the next five years. It wasn't right that Bridgeport has two City Halls while all the other cities have one City Hall.

Mr. Nicholson then spoke about the gun free zones in Bridgeport. He reiterated that the rules must be changed. People are afraid when they are in Bridgeport. He said that no one in the country should have the right to own an assault weapon. He said that people are talking about ISIS but they should be talking about arms.

ADJOURNMENT

Council President McCarthy adjourned the Public Speaking Portion of the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2015

7:00 PM

City Council Chambers, City Hall - 45 Lyon Terrace
Bridgeport, Connecticut

CALL TO ORDER

Council President McCarthy called the Council Meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

PRAYER

Council President McCarthy requested Council Member McBride-Lee to lead those present in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council President McCarthy requested Mr. Mario Testo, Democratic Town Committee Chair, to lead those present in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

City Clerk Martinez called the roll.

The following members were present:

130th District: Kathryn Bukovsky, Scott Burns
131st District: Jack O. Banta, Denese Taylor-Moye,
132nd District: M. Evette Brantley, John Olson
133rd District: Thomas McCarthy, Jeanette Herron
134th District: Michelle Lyons
135th District: Mary McBride-Lee, Richard Salter
136th District: Jose Casco, Alfredo Castillo
137th District: Aidee Nieves, Milta Feliciano
138th District: Anthony Paoletto, Nessah Smith
139th District: Eneida Martinez

Council President McCarthy announced that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia was absent due to illness and Council Member Holloway has a schedule conflict.

City Council Awards: Honoring Former City Council Members for their Dedication and Self Sacrifice during their Service on the City Council.

Council President McCarthy said that when people serve on the Council, they work very hard. He said that he would like to thank the following former Council Members:

Patricia Swain, Melanie Jackson, Susan Brannelly, Lydia and Michael Marella

Several of the former Council Members thanked everyone for their kind thoughts and for having the privilege of serving the City.

MINUTES FOR APPROVAL:

Approval of City Council Minutes: November 2, 2015

Council President McCarthy reminded everyone that only the members who were present on November 2, 2015 could approve these minutes.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED TO TABLE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 2, 2015 PENDING A CORRECTION.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BANTA SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWELVE (10) IN FAVOR (BANTA, TAYLOR-MOYE, MCCARTHY, LYONS, MCBRIDE-LEE, SALTER, CASCO, CASTILLO, FELICIANO, AND MARTINEZ) AND EIGHT ABSTENTIONS (BUKOVSKY, BURNS, BRANTLEY, OLSON, HERRON, NIEVES, PAOLETTO, AND SMITH).**

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE REFERRED TO COMMITTEES:

**** COUNCIL MEMBER LYONS MOVED THE FOLLOWING ITEMS ON THE AGENDA:**

21-15 COMMUNICATION FROM TAX COLLECTOR RE: REFUND OF EXCESS PAYMENTS CONCERNING HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS USA INC., REFERRED TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE.

22-15 COMMUNICATION FROM TAX COLLECTOR RE: REFUND OF EXCESS PAYMENTS CONCERNING WELLS FARGO HOME MORTGAGE, REFERRED TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE.

23-15 COMMUNICATION FROM LABOR RELATIONS RE: PROPOSED TENTATIVE AGREEMENT WITH AFSCME LOCAL 1522 – COUNCIL 4 REGARDING THE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR THEIR MEMBERSHIP, REFERRED TO CONTRACTS COMMITTEE.

24-15 COMMUNICATION FROM CENTRAL GRANTS RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION FOR THE 2011 FERRY BOAT DISCRETIONARY PROGRAM – WATER STREET DOCK PROJECT; 15-355, REFERRED TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

25-15 COMMUNICATION FROM CENTRAL GRANTS RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH PER CAPITA GRANT PROGRAM (PROJECT #16220), REFERRED TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

26-15 COMMUNICATION FROM CENTRAL GRANTS RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GRANT (PROJECT #16221), REFERRED TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

27-15 COMMUNICATION FROM CENTRAL GRANTS RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: STATE OF CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH FOR A PUBLIC HEALTH LEAD POISONING PREVENTION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE GRANT (PROJECT #16236), REFERRED TO ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE.

28-15 COMMUNICATION FROM CITY ATTORNEY RE: PROPOSED LITIGATION SETTLEMENT CONCERNING WORKERS COMPENSATION MATTER (WCC#40076124), REFERRED TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE.

29-15 COMMUNICATION FROM FINANCE RE: PROPOSED RESOLUTION APPROVING FY 2016 GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS, REFERRED TO BUDGET & APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE.

30-15 COMMUNICATION FROM MAYOR RE: APPOINTMENT OF CRUZ MANUEL COTTO (D) TO THE PARKS COMMISSION, REFERRED TO MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS COMMITTEE

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

MATTERS TO BE ACTED UPON (CONSENT CALENDAR):

***09-15 (A) Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Public Hearing Ordered for January 4, 2016: re (PHO) Disposition of City-Owned Property Located at 281-283 Dover Street by Auction, Sale to Abutter or by Sale to Community Based Housing Development Corporations.**

***16-15 Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Grant Submission: U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission for a Pool Safety Grant Program (Project #16269).**

***18-15 Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Grant Submission: Rockefeller Foundation for the 100 Resilient Cities Challenge Grant Program (Project #16208).**

***19-15 Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Grant Submission: Connecticut State Library FY 2016 Targeted Grant for a Historic Documents Preservation Grant Program.**

Council President McCarthy then asked if there was any Council Member who would like to remove an item from the Consent Calendar. Council Member Lyons requested that Agenda Item 90-15(A) be removed from the Consent Agenda. City Clerk Martinez then read the revised Consent Agenda into the record.

Council Member Martinez took a point of personal privilege to say that when the Grants Department comes to present grant applications to the Committee, they need to bring adequate information. She said that the Council Members want to insure that the grants that are being applied for are suitable for the City.

Council Member Lyons added that when the grants are coming to Committees, the Council needs to make sure there is adequate allocations for any matching funds that may be required. From now on, the Grants Department will be required to have documentation indicated that the funding is available in the Budget.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED THE FOLLOWING CONSENT CALENDAR:**

***16-15 ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: U.S. CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION FOR A POOL SAFELY GRANT PROGRAM (PROJECT #16269).**

***18-15 ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION FOR THE 100 RESILIENT CITIES CHALLENGE GRANT PROGRAM (PROJECT #16208).**

***19-15 ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT RE: GRANT SUBMISSION: CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY FY 2016 TARGETED GRANT FOR A HISTORIC DOCUMENTS PRESERVATION GRANT PROGRAM.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CASCO SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

***09-15 (A) Economic and Community Development and Environment Committee Report re: Public Hearing Ordered for January 4, 2016: re (PHO) Disposition of City-Owned Property Located at 281-283 Dover Street by Auction, Sale to Abutter or by Sale to Community Based Housing Development Corporations.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER MARTINEZ MOVED AGENDA ITEM 09-15 (A) ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT RE: PUBLIC HEARING ORDERED FOR JANUARY 4, 2016: RE (PHO) DISPOSITION OF CITY-OWNED PROPERTY LOCATED AT 281-283 DOVER STREET BY AUCTION, SALE TO ABUTTER OR BY SALE TO COMMUNITY BASED HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER FELICIANO SECONDED.**

Council Member Lyons commented that when they had met with Economic Development, there was a list of properties that were for sale. She requested that based on the fact that some residents had lost their homes over relatively minor debt, from now on all the properties, including the WPCA properties, should be sent to ECDE with the foreclosure information. Council Member Lyons said that some properties had been placed on hold for appraisals of the properties. This additional information will help the Council Members make a decision on the parcels.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Banta then took a point of personal privilege and spoke about the issues that had been brought up earlier in the meeting. He said that his records were open for anyone to inspect simply by asking him. In 2013, when he first ran for public office, he filled out the paperwork incorrectly and was later told never to do that again. Since then, he has been more careful not to make that mistake again.

Council Member Taylor-Moye took a point of personal privilege and said that she did her due diligence and worked very hard for her constituents. Council Member Taylor-Moye said that she did not like having her reputation defamed. She had several meet and greets and does her job by working with parents, and all the constituents. She put this out there to start the New Year fresh. People may hear all kinds of things from those who lost the election. Thank you.

Council Member Olson took a point of personal privilege to say in defense of the legislative aide in the City Clerk's office that the person who stated the aide was simply doing nothing was wrong.

Council President McCarthy took a point of personal privilege to tell Council Member Banta and Council Member Taylor-Moye that they were incredible Council Members and that he was proud to work with them, as he was with all the Council Members. The position takes a great deal of time and effort.

Council Member Lyons took a point of personal privilege to state that the Council Members are doing the best that they can. Her door is always open for anyone to see the records. There are certain guidelines that the Council Members are required to follow and they have to pay taxes on the money. She gave an example of how much money it cost her for gas one year. She wished everyone happy holidays, Merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and happy Kwanzaa.

Council Member Martinez took a point of personal privilege to say that she would like to give a round of applause to Mr. Flatto for a job well done with the budget. Taking the time to have a caucus to present the budget to the Council was important. 2015 and 2016 will be great because the doors of the Mayor's Office have been open and very supportive. Mr. Flatto called Council Member Martinez over the week-end and he didn't have to do that. She repeated her request that the administration keep the Council Members updated with the changes in personnel. Council Member Martinez said that she was proud of the Ganim Administration and felt they were doing a great job.

Council Member Martinez said she would like the police officer present to relay to Chief Gaudett that there was a home invasion yesterday on the East End and the police response was great. Three individuals were arrested shortly thereafter. Council Member Martinez said that this was the kind of public safety that they were looking for and thanked the Police Department for their work.

Council President McCarthy wished everyone happy holidays, Merry Christmas, happy Hanukkah and happy Kwanzaa.

ADJOURNMENT

- ** COUNCIL MEMBER SALTER MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
- ** COUNCIL MEMBER PAOLETTO SECONDED.**
- ** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services